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SOLIA

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SOLIA
THE HERALD

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CHRIST IS BORN! HRISTOS S'A NĂSCUT!

THE BASILICA OF THE NATIVITY

The Church of the Nativity [of our Lord] stands to the east of present-day Bethlehem. Later additions and the building of monasteries by the Greek Orthodox, the Latins [Roman Catholics] and the Armenians have altered the basilica's appearance and have disfigured the original splendid facade. Of the three principal entrances to the church, on the west side, only the middle door remains, and even this was narrowed down to a small low opening during the difficult years of the Turkish rule. The narthex, which had extended in earlier days along the entire west side, was partitioned into smaller sections thereby losing its original form. The wooden double portal of the basilica, with the carved crosses and arabesque decoration, was presented by two Armenian pilgrims in 1227.

The interior of the church has been preserved unchanged, with 40 monolithic pillars forming the five aisles of the basilica.

The greatest part of the Cave of the Nativity is hewn out of the natural rock, while the remaining part is built. The final modification of the grotto and all its interior decoration are dated to the 12th century.

To the north and south of the basilica, there are several natural caves and chapels associated with the Nativity, such as the cave of the Holy Innocents, the chapel of St. Joseph, the tomb of St. Jerome, etc.

The entire church, with the exception of certain alterations and additions in the narthex, is dated to the 6th century. The timber roof was replaced in the beginning of the 19th century, whereas the stone pavement is somewhat older. The wood-carved iconostasis dates in 1764. From the point of view of art and history, the most important features of the interior decoration are the wall mosaics and the icons painted on the pillars. Originally, the whole surface of the interior walls was covered with mosaics showing scenes from the life, miracles and Passion of Christ, figures of Angels, Prophets and Saints, and an immense representation of the "Tree of Jesse".... On the north wall were represented seven Regional Councils and on the south wall the seven Ecumenical Synods [Councils] in chronological sequence.... Within the blank space of the nave or of the double arch were written, in Greek, the key decisions of each of the Councils and Synods respectively.

The icons painted on the pillars show various Saints of the Eastern and the Western Church. The iconographic style is mixed, both Eastern and Western, and so are the Latin-Greek inscriptions. No difficulty exists in dating the mosaics and the icons, for a Greek inscription on the south side of the transept records not only the name of the iconographer, but also the year: Ephraim, 1169.

History of the Basilica of the Nativity at Bethlehem

The Justinian Basilica of the Nativity is built over the ruins of an earlier basilica, which had replaced a still earlier one built by St. Helena in A.D. 325 [during the rule of her son, the Emperor St. Constantine].

Although written sources refer to this first basilica quite often and give a description of the interior decoration, very scant information is provided on the plan of

Cont. on page 9

OUR COVER: The top photograph was taken in Bethlehem in the Cave of the Nativity, showing the spot where Jesus was born. It is marked with a silver star to symbolize the bright star which shone at the time of the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Matthew 2:2). The star was inscribed in Latin in 1717 with the words "HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST" (Here Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary). Icons and oil lamps hang above the holy site. The **lower photograph** shows the interior of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the church which was built over the cave where Christ was born. See the article above, "The Basilica of the Nativity", for a more detailed description and history of this holy site. (Photos and article are found in the book, **The Holy Land,** Vassilios Tzaferis, E. Tzaferis S.A. Publishing, Athens, Greece. 1987. pgs. 121-125). **Thank you to E. Tzaferis S.A. for permission to reproduce the photos and article.**

PASTORAL LETTER 1994

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

"How beautiful on the mountains, are the feet of one who brings good news, who heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation and tells Zion, 'Your God is king!'"

Isaiah 52:7

Dearly Beloved in Christ:

Christ is Born!

The Old and New Testaments foretell of the fulness of time, a moment in history when God, in his wisdom and by his plan, would send a distinct, chosen, unique individual to bring good news to the human race (Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 4:23).

Throughout history, prophets were called by God to speak out his message, usually a call to return to service to Him. They were individuals inspired by God, acting in his name, reminding the human race of its exalted place among all creatures and of its unique relationship with its Creator.

God sent other messengers, the bodiless powers or angels, whose appearance was a momentary alighting in time and whose presence terminated after the message was stated.

There have been great philosophers, pagans, outside the Chosen People of Israel who, by God's mercy, discovered various truths of the natural world and of human wisdom which they shared with the rest of mankind. Theirs is a subjective message with limited value and purpose, as is all merely human speculation and philosophy.

The Jewish People, however, expected the coming of a unique individual, a person set apart, chosen, anointed by God to speak in his name in the most perfect way, who would not be a temporary angelic messenger nor a prophet limited in purpose, nor a mere philosopher expounding subject theories.

St. John the Baptist, knowing his audience, stated: "The one who follows me is more powerful than I am; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11); and, "I myself am not the Christ" (John 3:28). The Samaritans, a people apart from the Jewish nation, came to believe in the Lordship of Jesus: "We have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the savior of the world" (John 4:42).

The words and deeds of Jesus Christ are in fact the Good News foretold in Isaiah which leads us to faith in his Lordship and which can bring peace into our hearts, happiness in our lives and salvation, God's gift to mankind.

His words are exhortations to fulfill oneself according to God's plan and by his help, his grace. To be filled with this peace, this happiness, this hope of salvation (1 Peter

1:8-9) we must know Jesus himself, we must also call him "Lord", we must confess him as Savior.

Christ came like a physician to renew his creation; a pioneer to those who lost the way; an illuminator to those whose minds were confused. Jesus is not, however, merely a physician, but is the remedy; not a trail-blazer, but the Way; not simply a light-bearer, but the Light who speaks not subjective words, but is the Word of God. He is not one of many human philosophers and teachers, but is the unique Wisdom (Hagia Sofia) of God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit; one in essence at whose Word the universe came into existence.

Jesus is not **a** choice, he is **the** Choice, the one chosen by God himself. His Church is the unique body of those who believe all of the above about him and live a unified sacramental life together in his presence. As one body, they confess their hope, their trust, their salvation based on belief that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Savior, the Anointed one of God, born of the Father before all ages and of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

When the Lord Jesus began his earthly ministry, the inhabited Roman world did not know him. In a short three hundred years, the Mediterranean world did know him and thereafter, his Good News has gone out to the ends of the world so that this day, there is no continent where his name is not honored and where peace, happiness and salvation are not present. Christ said: "Be yeast" leavening God's created world; "Be salt" flavoring the bitterness of this life. Thus, believers are the yeast, the salt, the light bearing witness to God's Good News, bearing it on the "beautiful feet" of witnessing.

Christ came face to face with many pagan philosophies in Israel; the apostles and holy fathers did likewise thereafter, and the power of the Good News spoken of in the Prophet Isaiah transfigured those philosophies then as it does in our day. All mankind shall acknowledge the uniqueness of the Holy Trinity, giving glory, honor and worship forever.

With the feast of the Nativity of Christ, there is born in all mankind the seeds of peace, happiness and salvation common to all human creatures. Those who confess Christ as Lord and who bear the fruits of these seeds must lend their feet, that is, their witness, to proclaim to others that the savior of the world who brings peace, happiness and salvation for all mankind, for all ages, forever was born unto us, Wonder-Counselor, Prince of Peace.

Glorify him!

+NATHANIEL, Bishop

HOLY SYNOD MEETS

The Holy Synod of the Church met at St. Tikhon onastery, South Canaan, Pennsylvania, in Autumn ses- on, October 24-27. Present were: Metropolitan HEODOSIUS, Archbishops KYRILL, PETER, MITRI, HERMAN, Bishops NATHANIEL, JOB, KHON, SERAPHIM.

Liturgical texts for St. Alexis Toth and St. Jacob etsvetov are available for use. The elevation of rchpriests John Kochurov and Alexander Hotovitsky ill be on December 4, in Moscow. St. Jacob Netsvetov as canonized on October 16, in Anchorage.

Reports from the following were also heard: Bicen- nnial Celebration; Director of Development; SCOBA Iission Board; Canonization Commission; Director of ommunications; Late Vocations; Synodal Commission n Theological Education; Humanitarian Aid; Liability nsurance Coverage; Pre-conciliar Commission; 11th All merica Council; Administrative Task Force Recom- nendations; OCA Health Board; OCMC Mission Board.

nternational Church Relations Unit

Metropolitan THEODOSIUS has been invited by Pa- iarch BARTHOLOMEW to a future visit at the Phanar. he status of the Russian Patriarchal representative in merica was reviewed without change. His Beatitude vill issue a letter on Orthodox Unity to the heads of all Orthodox Churches on the occasion of the canonizations f the American saints. A discussion on the BALAMAND STATEMENT" followed the reading of Archbishop DMITRI's response to it as invited by the esser Synod. "The members of the Holy Synod, in eviewing an **un-official** text of the Balamand Statement ranslated in English from the French recognizes that the Balamand Statement elicits a great divergence of theo- ogical opinion among the Orthodox." Further study is being made on the translation and issues raised. Bishop NATHANIEL reported on his visit to Romania to mem- bers of the Church hierarchy and monasteries.

"Employee Assistance Program"

680 clergy and their dependents will be covered by the new EAP program. Services will be offered within the United States, with affiliations in Canada, Alaska and Mexico.

Ecumenical Relations

The Holy Synod anticipates that a unified system of speaking in the name of the Church will result from the meeting at Ligonier in November/December.

Handbook on Clergy Guidelines

Bishop NATHANIEL presented a revised draft of the "Handbook on Clergy Guidelines".

Federated Russian Orthodox Clubs (FROC)

A letter from the FROC was read by its president, Dr. Michael Wusylko, petitioning the Holy Synod to accept the FROC as an official organization of the OCA. The Synod acted to accept the petition and a commission was established to formalize the process.

"Studies for Today's Christian"

Archbishop DMITRI presented the Synod with papers on "Marriage and the Priesthood, " and " The Priesthood as Vocation." They will be published under the title of: "Studies for Today's Christian: A series of papers prepared by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America concerning contemporary issues." ❁

HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

October 15, Saturday. Cleveland, OH. St. Mary. Morning: Meeting of ARFORA Executive Board. **Afternoon:** Meeting of the Department of Religious Education. **Evening:** Festivities for 90th Anniversary. **October 16, Sunday.** Divine Liturgy. Festive Banquet.

October 20, Thursday. Jackson, MI. Holiday Inn. Attended seminar on Business Procedures & Office Management.

October 22-23. Bridgeport, CT. St. Dimitrie. Celebration of 70th Anniversary. **Saturday:** Great Vespers, Reception. **Sunday:** Divine Liturgy, Festive banquet.

October 25-27. Tuesday-Thursday. South Canaan, PA. St. Tikhon's Seminary. Fall meeting of the Holy Synod.

November 5, Saturday. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Presided at Episcopate Council meeting. ❁

INFORMATIVE BULLETIN

Annual Synod / General Assembly of all Parishes

The Episcopate Office anticipates receipt of all parish membership rosters and dues BEFORE the Annual Parish Synod. Please allow enough time to submit your clearly typewritten membership lists (in triplicate copy) for Episcopate approval by **January 9, 1995.** A Parish Synod CANNOT be held without the Episcopate approval of the Parish membership roster.

EPISCOPATE COUNCIL MEETS

St. George Cathedral was the site of the November 5 meeting of the Episcopate Council. Present were: His Grace, Bishop NATHANIEL, V.R. Laurence Lazar, Council Secretary, Rev. Remus Grama, Richard Rogozan, Episcopate Treasurer, George Ross and John Besoi, Episcopate Auditors, Dan Chirtu, Dumitru Popovici, Armand Scala, Dr. Eleanor Bujea, John Stanitz; guests V.R. Richard Grabowski and Constantin Tofan. Also present, Legal Counselors, Ronald Muresan and John Regule.

Assistant Treasurer, Mark Chestnut, walked the members through a written report on the finances.

Highlights of the report:

$100,000.00	Acceptance from the Bota Foundation for the Diocesan Administrative Center
$50,000.00	Acceptance from estate of George R. Gavrila
$25,000.00	Acceptance from estate of Lenore Kinnear
$12,242.76	General improvement plan for the Diocesan Center, Vatra Romaneasca
$22,356.00	Summer Camp expenses

Acknowledgement of disbursements of Diocesan Auxiliary and Goldy Scholarships: $4,000.

The Episcopate Auditors proposed acceptance of a five month audit of all the Episcopate funds.

FINANCIAL ACTION taken to disburse:

Administration:

$5,000	Orthodox Christian Centre at Ft. Qu' Appelle to complete the centre (in addition to the budgeted $2,500.)

Department of Christian Assistance:

$4,000	Diocese of Alba Iulia Seminary
$8,640	Diocese of Tirgoviste Printing Machine
$2,000	Archdiocese of Cluj print shop
$5,250	Archdiocese of Sibiu Seminary (clothing)
$1,000	Sambata de Sus Monastery
$200	Parishes of Avrig and Rasnov, $100 each
$2,000	Assistance to Romanian Stowaways attorney travel expenses

Department of Missions:

$1,000	Project Mexico

Department of Education/ Seminarian Funds:

$2,000	St. Tikhon Seminary ($1,500 - Seminarian Regman, $500 - Romanian Seminarian)

CLERGY ISSUES:

A proposal for "Clergy Sabbatical Leave" was read; members will consider the proposal for future action. A "Clergy Continuing Education Committee" was established to help in this work. In depth discussion on clergy insurance and employment benefits and concerns was held. A special report on the clergy Health Insurance survey showed that out of 91 polls, only 31 priests responded. Of those, 16 were in favor of an Episcopate Health Plan. The Committee will continue its work.

Discussion was held on the OCA Chancery Guidelines in cases of Sexual misconduct relating to parish problems. All clergy received the guidelines. Council Members each received a video tape, "Reducing the Risk." This is a continuation of the same matter discussed at the Clergy Conference, 1994.

DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION CENTER:

Planning on the Diocesan Administrative Building continues. The soil was tested; Ground breaking foreseen for Spring.

His Grace reported on Holy Transfiguration and Holy Dormition Monasteries; the building projects of St. Mary, New York and St. John, Kitchener.

CONSTITUTION AND BY LAWS will be sent out to each parish for immediate use. A formal printed, bilingual edition will be forthcoming in the new year.

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS:

An oral report was given by members of the Inter-Diocesan Committee. Papers were exchanged and comments shared on issues in recent publications. The work will continue.

A letter of thanks for the Monastery of Oasa was read.

CENTRAL CHURCH ADMINISTRATION:

His Grace briefed the Council on some work of the Holy Synod, providing them with a copy of his obligations as Unit Head for Pastoral Life Ministries.

Treasurer Rogozan, Secretary Lazar and the Chair will discuss the ROEA financial participation in OCA activities.

The All America Council for July 17-21, 1995, in Chicago was discussed. Members felt that the format of the Council needs to be reformed, proposing that delegates represent the diocese and not each parish. Each parish has already been informed by the Episcopate Chancery of the financial fees.

The Bishop informed the Council of his appointment of V. R. Constantin Tofan to the Orthodox Christian Mission Board, under the auspices of SCOBA.

The Episcopate Council congratulated His Grace on the 10th year of his Episcopate enthronement as titular bishop of the Episcopate.

The next meeting of the Episcopate Council will take place in the spring; no date has been set. ❊

HFR In Action

During the month of August, Help for Romania (HFR) ıd the opportunity to receive a large donation of garden :ds for Romania. Due to the fact that there was a final ıte for acceptance and loading it, we could not use that nation. The authorities (both state and church) did not swer in the time limit of 8 days. The donation was ven to someone else.

During the summer months and early autumn, we llected various donations; and, on October 25, we sent hipment to Romania. The container is due to arrive in ıcharest on December 15. Included in the 30,000 pounds cargo are some medical supplies (a total of 19 skids), othing, books and other various items. The distribution ll be made in Romania by the priests and laymen of e DIACONIA project of the Patriarchate of Bucharest, der the supervision of Bishop TEOFAN, Patriarchal-car.

On October 30, we received a large donation of books om the library of the research center of BP Oil Com-ny in Cleveland. Fr. Remus Bleahu of Youngstown d some of his friends helped with the loading and nloading of the 300 boxes of books, which we trans-rted to the Brother's Brother Foundation warehouse in ttsburgh in a rental U-Haul. 25 boxes of clothing were ceived as a donation on November 3, and with the help Fr. Eugen Rosu of Ellwood City, were loaded and ken to the same warehouse in another rented van. hese items will be packed and made ready for the next ontainer which we hope to ship in the first part of anuary 1995.

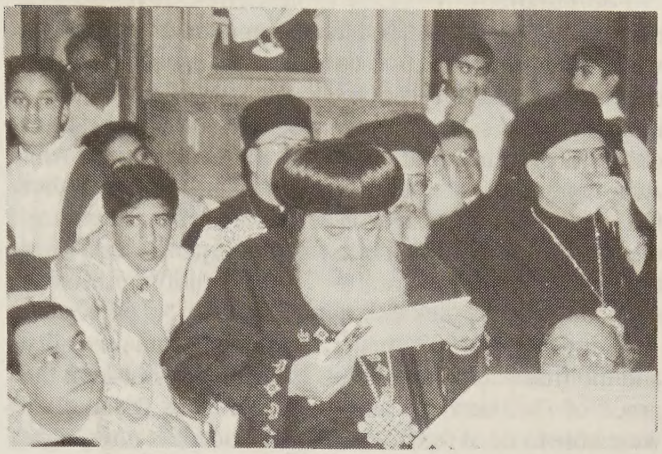
Our big hope at this time is a large donation of corn eds which was promised to us by the same donor who onated corn seed in 1990 and 1991. This seed will be sed primarily for the Republic of Moldova, but some of , also, for Romania. If all our hopes materialize, we ope to have the seed transported in a timely way, so that can be used next spring for the planting season. Our ig helper for the seed donation is our friend, Mr. Luke Hingson, the Chief Executive Officer of the Brother's Brother Foundation in Pittsburgh, PA.

As the Christmas season approaches and everyone vants to make a gift, I am urging all our friends and upporters to include in your gift list a donation for the eedy people of Romania. Send your tax deductible ontribution to the Episcopate — marking it for HFR, or end it directly to me. The checks should be made pay-ble to: **Help for Romania.**

With thanks from all who benefit from our actions, I vish you all a Blessed Christmas AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU in the New Year.

Very Rev. Richard J. Grabowski
U.S. Coordinator — Help for Romania
533 Oak Knoll Ave. N.E.
Warren, OH 44483-5317
Tel. (216) 394-8575
Fax (216) 393-2581

POPE SHENOUDA BLESSES TROY ALTAR



His Holiness, Pope SHENOUDA III, seated on the solea, prepares to begin the service of consecration. Bishop NATHANIEL is at the right.

His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of Alexandria of the See of St. Mark, consecrated the St. Mary and St. George altar of St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church in Troy, Michigan, October 14.

The service was conducted in English, Church Coptic and Arabic by His Holiness. St. Mark Church serves the spiritual needs of the growing Coptic community in the Michigan area. The second altar was needed for the celebration of services to accommodate the needs of the faithful. A lenten banquet was held in the spacious social hall of the parish following the service.

At the invitation of Abuna Roufiel, parish priest of St. Mark, His Grace, Bishop NATHANIEL, attended the service. Also present were: V. Rev. Frs. Roman Braga, Felix Dubneac, Laurence Lazar, and Rev. Fr. Leonte Copacia. The clergy received a Papal medalion as did Bishop NATHANIEL who also received an icon of the Christ Child and Virgin Mary. ❊

At the banquet, Abuna Roufiel (in foreground) responds to a question from the audience. Seated on the dais, His Holiness, Bishop NATHANIEL and other guests enjoy the moment.

Michigan Monastery To Expand

Foundation

For hundreds of years monasteries have existed throughout the world and have functioned in various ways. Some are more involved with lay people than others, but all have the same purpose of providing a means for the salvation of mankind. Here, in the tranquility of south central Michigan, 40 miles west of Ann Arbor, we found the best place to worship and to further Orthodoxy and the tradition of monasticism, by setting the foundation of an Orthodox monastery fashioned after the one that we left behind — The Dormition of Mother of God — in Văratec (Romania).

In January of 1988, this undertaking became a reality and the first part of the dream was fulfilled; through the grace of God and the help of God-loving friends, we were able to open the monastery's doors. It is now, eight years later, a place where hundreds of pilgrims come every year to pray, to rest, to meditate, or to experience for a few hours, or a few days, the tranquility of a simple way of life.

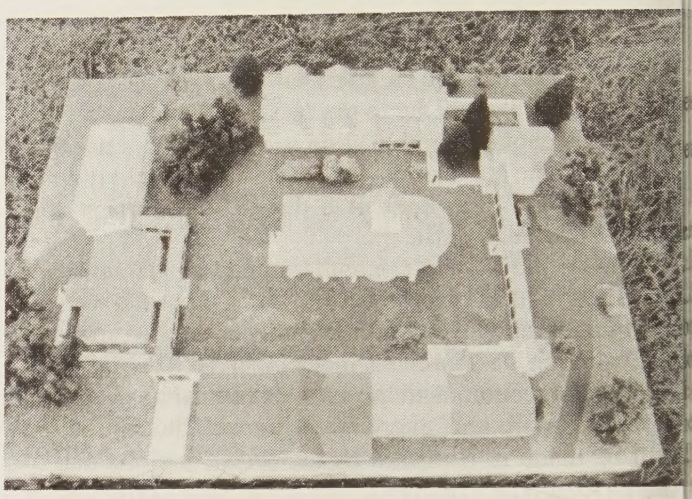
Mission

According to the saying of the Lord: *"... and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away"* (John: 6:37), we are here to share our love and our concern for all who come to us, for rest, worship, spiritual healing and rejuvenation. **The Dormition of Mother of God Monastery** does not exist for the sake of the sisters who live here, but to serve God and the people. The two main aspects of our monastic life are prayer and hospitality, much in the same spirit as that of St. Paul: *"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares"* (Hebrews 13:2). Hospitality and the furthering of the Orthodox faith are our primary concerns. People come from all over the United States, Canada and from overseas to worship together and glorify God.

Monasteries are important institutions in the life of the Church, in the spiritual life of the people. They are gifts from God, helping us find within ourselves the goodness and love that is Christ. The foundation of this monastery represents the unity of deep Orthodox faith, as well as the continuity of this faith in the land. We want this monastery to be, and always remain, a holy place, a place for Orthodox Christians; a place with stable foundations which time, with its continuous changes, will not be able to destroy because it was born out of the depths of faith. It is our hope and prayer that this place will grow, reaching the heights of all spiritual understanding. As the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga once said: *"... a monastery is not only a place for monastics ..."* it is a place for all to worship.

Expansion Necessary

The existing facilities of the monastery have become insufficient for the ever increasing needs of all who come, as well as for the ten sisters and two monks who live here now. Expansion plans are under way. The new dining room will accommodate up to one hundred guests, and will also serve as a conference room for retreats. The new kitchen will be equipped to cater to the multitude of pilgrims, and at the same time eliminate the need to use the facilities located in two different buildings. For the constantly increasing number of guests who come to the monastery every weekend, a new guest house will be built. The nuns' quarters will also be expanded to provide more room for the sisters and their activities. A Byzantine style church will be built in the center of the courtyard. The new church will be large enough to have room for up to two hundred people. Construction is expected to start in the Spring. The first part of this expansion project includes the new dining and kitchen facilities and also the badly needed nuns' quarters.



Scale model of proposed Monastery complex.

Please Be Generous

Being self-supporting, we depend on the love and generosity of people to help further the work of God. We pray that you will again show your love and generosity by becoming part of this project. Nothing can be done without your help. Please be generous. You can pledge your support over a longer period of time, or you can make one or several donations. We will list the names of all contributors in the Monastery's Honor Book and will remember you in the monastery's daily prayers.

Any donation, no matter how small, is needed and well appreciated. This Christmas season remember St. Paul and his Epistle to the Corinthians: "Now there our diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for the profit of all" (1 Cor. 12:4-7). ❄

The Sisterhood

Send your donations to:
Holy Dormition Monastery
3389 Rives Eaton Road, Rives Junction, MI 49277

ARFORA ALMANAC

ccember, 1994

ear Sisters and Supporters of ARFORA:

By now, most of you in the R.O.E.A. are owners of a autiful icon of St. Parascheva, Patron Saint of R.F.O.R.A., distributed in your church in October. R.F.O.R.A. was very pleased to bring this gift to you mmemorating A.R.F.O.R.A.'s Patron Saint. I was ased to be in Cleveland on October 16 and shared in tributing the icons to the ladies in church, along with President of St. Mary's Ladies Auxiliary, Carlotta clau.

1994 is the International Year of the Family. We now d ourselves in the month of December — how time es. Christmas is just around the corner. On behalf of R.F.O.R.A., we wish you a very blessed Christmas, a ne of family get-togethers and joyous reflections of the rist Child whose birthday we are celebrating. If you ed to travel, "Drum bun," drive carefully and have a fe and happy family-centered Christmas.

One of the things I really look forward to at Christmas going around with the "Colinde", singing carols in omanian for those who understand the language, and in nglish in the homes where Romanian is not spoken. I rticularly like visiting the nursing homes and senior mplexes to sing the carols. To see the faces of the sidents light up and to watch them in the singing akes us soon forget the frozen noses we get in the elow zero weather. Be sure to take your children with ou when you go carolling. If you have never gone rolling, I guarantee that once you go you will never rget it. You will definitely plan to make a habit of it.

Just a reminder for the December business of .R.F.O.R.A., the annual meetings are coming up. When ou get the auxiliary information sheet to fill in your fficers, please complete it promptly and return it to our ecretary, Kay Banda, 205 - 20th Ave. E., Regina SK, 4N 1J5 Canada. Florence Churilla is to receive your embership lists with addresses and phone numbers of ll your members. Attach the membership dues of your adies auxiliary which are payable in January for 1995, ased on your membership in 1994. Her address is 22402 lmwood Ave., Eastpointe, MI 48021-2178.

May you have a memorable Christmas with family nd friends, and may your new year bring you health and appiness. May God bless us all. ❊

(Dr.) Eleanor Bujea, President

JANUARY ISSUE DEADLINE
December 16

BASILICA OF NATIVITY

Cont. from pag. 2

the church. The missing details were supplemented by archaeological excavations and discoveries.

The archaeological investigation carried out at the site of the present basilica in 1934 has brought to light remains from the first church built by St. Helena. These finds indicate that an octagonal structure was erected directly above the Cave of the Nativity. An opening at the centre permitted pilgrims to look at the cave. This octagonal structure formed part of a five-aisle basilica without a narthex, but with a large square atrium. The floor of the basilica and that of the octagon were covered with polychrome mosaics. This 4th century church remained unchanged for almost 200 years, until the mid-6th century, when the Byzantine Emperor Justinian replaced it by the basilica we see today. The octagon was superseded by a triapsidal sanctuary above the Cave of the Nativity, the atrium was retained, and a narthex was added.

The new basilica of Justinian, though larger in size, was not as beautiful and magnificent as the earlier church. Later-date sources inform us that the Emperor was displeased with the new building and ordered the punishment of the architect in charge.

Very little is known on the interior decoration of Justinian's basilica although, according to later sources, it must have been rich and impressive. A mosaic representation of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi adorned the west wall of the narthex overlooking the atrium. This [beautiful] representation is said to have saved the church from destruction during the Persian invasion of Palestine in A.D. 614.

The difficult years of the Arab occupation (A.D. 639-1099) saw the final deterioration of the timber roof and the ruin of the interior decoration. The Crusaders in cooperation with the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus restored the church and renewed the interior decoration of mosaics and wall paintings in the iconographical style of the Eastern Orthodox Church with the help of Greek and [other] Orthodox artists.

The beginning of the 17th century found the church in a sad state of decay. Had the Franciscan monk Qaresmius, who travelled to Bethlehem in the mid-17th century, visited the Basilica of the Nativity one hundred years later, he would have been unable to leave us the so important detailed descriptions of the church mosaics. For, by that time, he would have seen what we see today: a few, very few fragments. ❊

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World Church News

American Hierarchs to Meet in Pan-Orthodox Conference

Ligonier, PA — Primates, metropolitans, archbishops and bishops of the Orthodox Churches in America will meet on November 30, December 1 and 2, in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, in a pan-Orthodox conference sponsored by The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA). According to Archbishop IAKOVOS (President of SCOBA), they will "share the opportunity of working together in unity." Papers will be presented on "Mission," "Evangelism" and "Diaspora." (The Word, November 1994)

Orthodox Joint Action in Europe

Athens — Orthodox European members of Parliament gathered in Athens at the beginning of November to "create a platform to promote peace and dialogue based on common cultural heritage." Representatives from Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Greece, Finland, Belarus, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia, Armenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Cyprus and from the European Parliament attended the meeting. (Hellenic Chronicle, Nov. 10, 1994)

Serbian Bishop Installed in Western USA

Los Angeles — The Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Western America received its new spiritual father, Sunday, September 18, with the enthronement of Bishop JOVAN (John) as the third hierarch in its history. Consecrated on July 24, 1993, at the Studenica Monastery, where he was the abbot, His Grace Bishop JOVAN was elected by the Serbian Holy Synod to this new mission. The enthronement ceremony was presided by His Beatitude Patriarch PAVEL in the St. Steven Cathedral, Alhambra, California, near Los Angeles. The Serbian Patriarch was assisted by Metropolitans CHRISTOPHER and IRINEY, Bishop GEORGE of Canada, Bishop MITROPHAN, all of the Serbian Church in America, and Bishop TIKHON of San Francisco (OCA). (The Path of Orthodoxy, November 1994).

Romanian American Bilateral Dialogue

Detroit — The bilateral commission for the dialogue between the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (OCA) and the Romanian Missionary Archdiocese (Romanian Patriarchate) met at the beginning of November in Windsor, Canada. The members of the commission were: V. Rev. Frs. Laurence Lazar, Nicholas Apostola, Richard Grabowski, Ioan Gherman, Gheorghe Chisca and Frs. Ioan Ionita, George Sandulescu, Romey Rosco and Gregory Becker. Continuing the efforts that led to the normalization of ecclesial relations in 1993, the delegates evaluated the existing situation and identified new themes that need to be debated together in contemplation of future Orthodox unity in America. The next meeting is scheduled for February 1994.

Stolen Polish Icon Returned

Warsaw — A 16th century icon of St. Onophrius, which was stolen in 1991, was returned undamaged to the Orthodox Monastery of Jableczna by police on August 13, 1994. A 19th century stolen icon of the Virgin Mary was returned at the same time. This was one of several robberies of valuable icons. Poland's largest post-war theft occurred at one of the Orthodox Churches in Plock in February 1993, when 18 uninsured icons were snatched by overnight intruders.

Romanian Theologian Teodor Bodogae Fallen Asleep

Sibiu — Romanian Church sources announced the falling asleep in the Lord of Dr. Teodor Bodogae, 83. The late professor of Byzantine Art and History was born in 1911 in Cetatea de Balta (Alba). He studied in Sibiu, and Cernauti, where he received his Doctorate in Theology (1938). He continued his studies in Athens, Greece; Belgrade (1939-40); Berlin and Tubingen (1941-42). As a Byzantinologist, he attended congresses of South East European studies, becoming known for his works. Among his known works remains "The Romanian Contributions to Mount Athos" (Sibiu, 1940), his original patristic studies and translations from Greek, German and Russian. Among those are translations of N. Cabasilas, The Life of the Blessed Macrina, Philocalia and many others. Hundreds of his articles and studies were published tirelessly in the theological journals.

Albanian Orthodox Struggles

Triana — The Orthodox Press Service communicated lately the protests of the Albanian Orthodox Church hierarchy against the threats of the Albanian Government to impose by plebiscite a new Constitutional amendment that requires "large religious communities" to be led by "Albanian citizens, born in Albania, with permanent residence therein during the last 20 years" (OPS). Since 1992, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople appointed Archbishop ANASTASIOS to the leadership of the Orthodox Albanian Autocephalous Church. Reports from Albania reflect either the position of the Government or that of the Church hierarchy, with no indication of the desire of the Albanian faithful. According to "The Illuminator," No. 103/1994, "the Albanian Church counts a significant minority of members with a Greek culture, but most parishes and priests are Albanian and use the Albanian language in religious services." In a recent statement, the Greek Archdiocese of America laments the "intimidation and harassment" of the Greek Orthodox minority. Such tensions have led to the closing of borders between Greece and have led to the closing of borders between Greece and Albania. There is a large Romanian-speaking population in Albania.

Ethiopian Seminary Reopened

Addis Ababa — The Ethiopian Orthodox Church's College of Theology closed in the capital of Ethiopia by the Marxist dictator Mengistu Hail Mariam in 1974, was reopened on October 24. Patriarch Abune PAULOS of the Ethiopian Church was present for the occasion. The seminary registered a total of 150 students for its two programs. This was a time to remember the many Orthodox and Protestant church leaders who disappeared with no trace during the Marxist rule.

Holy Dormition Monastery on Video

Our readers may be interested in experiencing in their own living rooms a pilgrimage to Holy Dormition Monastery, Rives Junction, Michigan. The video tape may be ordered from Firebird Videos, Audios, Books and Tours, P.O. Box 303, Belleville, MI, 48112-0303, for $24.95 each, plus $3 postage and handling. One features Bishop NATHANIEL and one featuring Archbishop VICTORIN.❊

Compiled by Rev. Fr. Remus Grama

PARISH BULLETIN NOTES

Chicago, IL. St. Mary. We hosted the meeting of the Orthodox Clergy of the Chicago area. A delicious luncheon was served by our ladies. ... They sponsored a successful Rummage Sale. ... Following Divine Liturgy and a Memorial Service, we all enjoyed a wonderful Banquet celebrating the 83rd Anniversary of our Church. ... Our Senior Citizen Club members enjoy their monthly meetings. ... Congratulations to Fr. Susan on becoming an American citizen.

Woonsocket, RI. St. John. We had a well-attended Dinner Dance to celebrate the 82nd Anniversary of our parish. The folk music and dancing was enjoyed by all.

Indianapolis, IN. Sts. Constantine & Helen. We all enjoyed the "Raise the Roof" Variety Show which helped with the cost of the new roof over the parish house, and will help with repairing the church roof. ... The Central Indiana Council of Orthodox Churches sponsored a Retreat and Unction Service at our church. Guest speaker was Fr. Joseph Morris. ... We are selling baseball caps, white or black, with a gold embroidered Orthodox cross.

Falls Church, VA. St. Mary. Marie Ficken, our choir director, received an award from Metropolitan THEODOSIUS for the beautiful job of directing the pan-Orthodox choir during the closing activities of the 200th Anniversary celebration. ... Congratulations to John Bilyeu who was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. ... Our annual parish picnic had a good attendance. ... Anna Rij is currently appearing as one of the two youngest daughters in a local theater production of "Fiddler on the Roof." ... Everyone worked hard to make our annual Flea Market a success.

Elkins Park, PA. Descent Holy Ghost. The Recent "Penny Party" sponsored by our Ladies Auxiliary was very profitable. They donated $7,000 to the Repair Fund. ... A good crowd attended our "Balul Strugur." ... The hanging fruit decorating the hall was guarded by "police" who charged a fine to those caught taking the fruit (all in fun). ... A TV crew from Romania visited our church to film the premises and services offered and to interview parishioners. The film will be shown in Romania.

Winnipeg, MB. St. George. Our Ladies Auxiliary was quite busy. Their St. Paraschiva Dinner was a success, and proceeds are earmarked for the ARFORA Mission Fund. Their Bake Sale at a local shopping center was well patronized, and their pirogies were great "sellers" at a large craft show.

Ellwood City, PA. St. Elias. Our parishioners made an all-out effort to collect clothing to be shipped to Romania. Our annual Autumn Dinner was well patronized.

Dearborn Hgts., MI. Sts. Peter & Paul. Our church and St. Paul Bulgarian Cathedral had a Church School exchange of church visits. ... As usual, the Men's Club had a delicious Spaghetti Dinner attended by many. ... Our 65th Anniversary Banquet had excellent food and a wonderful program of Orthodox hymns presented by the Orthodox Christian Chorale directed by Valerie Yova.

Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. The Ladies Auxiliary sponsored a successful Rummage/Bake Sale. ... Congratulations to Tim Copacia who was recently featured among the Detroit area up-and-coming business leaders, and to Natalia Ivascu for winning First Place in the AROY "Writing Extravaganza." ... We celebrated our 82nd Anniversary with Divine Liturgy, Parastas, and a delicious festive Banquet. ... We were proud to host the 85th Anniversary of the United Romanian Society on October 23. One of our special guests included Michigan Governor John Engler.

Hermitage, PA. Holy Cross. The Ladies Auxiliary again sponsored their yearly successful "Chinese Auction." The Parents Assoc. prepared and served the Episcopate Dinner which was well supported. ... Congratulations to Virginia Shank who was elected as president of the Shenango Valley Women's Orthodox Guild. ... The Church School collected items for the Transfiguration Monastery, then organized an outing there to deliver them. ... We thank the donors of the new computer and printer received for our church office.

Canton, OH. St. George. Our young people met to make and decorate glass and ceramic ornaments for the holidays. ... The Church School sponsored a "Family Church Night" as a general fellowship gathering.

Cleveland, OH. St. Mary. Our Fall Dinner/Drawing was a great success. ... Larisa Lucaci had a one woman Art Show open to the public. ... We hosted a recent Deanery clergy meeting. ... A Romanian TV team visited our church and conducted interviews and took pictures which will be seen in Romania.

Warren, OH. Holy Resurrection. Congratulations to Dacia Ludwick who was selected to attend The National Young Leaders Conference in Washington, D.C., and to Sylvia Florea who was an honoree at the recent Union & League Convention. ... The first Sunday of each month the Teen Class observes "Youth Sunday," doing all the necessary activities in the church that day.

St. Paul, MN. St. Mary. Our Izvorasul dance group is quite busy appearing at various festivals. Our dancer, Mira Jurich, was crowned "Ms. Romanaşul 1994" at the Chicago Banat Festival.

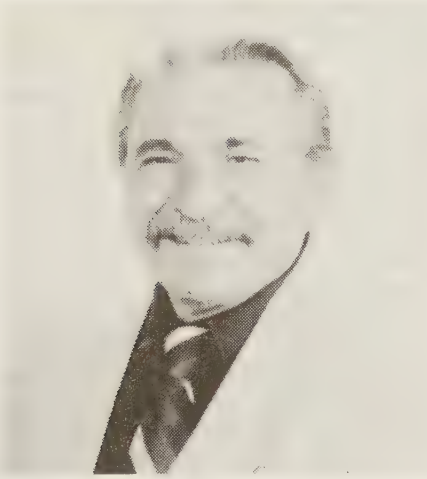
Fairlawn, OH. Presentation Our Lord. Our first annual Rummage Sale proved profitable. ... The Christian Orthodox Council of Akron held its annual Charity Benefit Dinner at our church. ... Our Hayride & Bonfire was fun for the whole family.

Regina, SK. St. George. Our sincere thanks to all those who sponsored our many new icons. ... Our Charity Committee organized the collection of food for the needy children attending the Wetmore School. Also, on a Christmas tree, each student had a "Wish Angel." These were selected by parishioners who bought a suitable gift for their "angel."

Youngstown, OH. Holy Trinity. Our community looks forward to our Annual Bazaar where they enjoy our good ethnic food and pastries, as well as picking up many bargains and gifts. ... After studying about the ancestors of Jesus, the Church School children worked on their own "family tree" with their parents and brought them to class. ... 30 years ago, our parish bought the Charles Arms Mansion and transformed it into our present church.❊

Compiled by Florence Sirb

In Memory



Julian "Joe" Lapadat

Julian Joseph Lapadat was born on December 23, 1931, to Paraschiva and John Lapadat in Comlosul Mare, Banat, Romania. After completing his primary education in Comlos, he continued his secondary education in Timisoara at Scoala Normala until the war came and interrupted his studies. He was an extremely bright child who showed promise of things to come and was loved by all. His love for his church was apparent at a very young age. Mica (his Mother) remembers the first time he sang the epistle in church — at his own request. His God given talents of music, logic, and love of fellowman were apparent early on.

In 1947, at age sixteen, Julian Joseph, along with his mother Mica, and sister Sylvia, migrated to America leaving behind their dearly loved father Ticu, and settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where they became active in the Romanian community. 1949 was a year of joy as the family was reunited with their father.

Julian began his studies in America, and through diligence and hard work learned the English language in six months — accent free. He had an intense desire to become American and began to use his middle name of Joseph or "Joe" as we know him today. Joe graduated from Frankfurt High School with honors in 1949.

1951 brought a new adventure as Joe joined the United States Air Force and served a 4 year tour of duty. In 1952, Uncle Sam shipped him to March Air Force Base in Riverside, California. He left the wintery east coast dressed in an overcoat and brogands, arriving in Southern California on a beautiful balmy day with palm trees swaying in the breeze, and he vowed never to leave. Shortly thereafter, he visited Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church, on Easter, where he was warmly received and came to be loved by all. He encouraged his family to move west, because he knew that California was where he would make his home.

It was at Holy Trinity Church that he met his bride to be, Mary Popescu, with whom he was joined in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony on October 25, 1953. The union was blessed with two beautiful daughters, Laura and Diana, and later with five wonderful grandchildren, Nicole, Joshua, Jeremy (deceased), Matthew, and Melinda, all whom he loved and cherished.

Family life evolved around the church parish where Joe demonstrated quality leadership, tremendous energy, and financial support. He was a staunch choir member, served on the church council in many capacities, was advisor to the youth group (LAROY), and served numerous times as a delegate to the annual Episcopate Congress at the Vatra, in Jackson, Michigan. The latter gave him an opportunity to maintain contact with his east coast family members and make new friends all across the land. His warm outgoing personality, quick intellect, and willingness to work hard and do whatever needed doing, endeared him to everyone with whom he came in contact. The word "NO" or "I CAN'T" were never a part of his vocabulary.

Joe's pioneering spirit was apparent in his career as well, when in 1956 he entered the then burgeoning computer field. He grew with the industry and moved up the ladder of success, working for Rocketdyne, Litton, Northrop, and International Rectifier. In 1980, Joe retired from corporate America, moved to Orange County, began his own consulting business, and then ventured into his most rewarding career — Real Estate Development.

His move to Orange County did not hinder his commitment to Holy Trinity Parish, where he continued to be active and totally committed in heart and spirit.

One of the most significant acts of generosity and achievement was Joe's return to his homeland, Romania, with a delegation that included Father Richard Grabowski, to deliver a shipload of emergency relief after the revolution that began in Timisoara, the town of his youth. The young man with much promise had returned more than forty years later with help and hope for his motherland, where he was still remembered.

He loves you all and asks you to remember him in prayer. He asks that you be tolerant of one another, forgive one another and above all **LOVE** one another. Remember the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians:

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends! 1 Corinthinians 13:4

Loving Memories Of A Friend

How can we ever be thankful enough for friends? Of all the joys in our lives, few can be greater or have a bigger impact on us than the friendship of people we respect and love.

In a special category of friendship for me are my church friends, people I never would have met or known if I hadn't been going to our church. I know I can count on their friendship, support, love and prayers through thick and thin. When the rest of my life has seemed doubtful or shaky, these friends have been solid walls of

Cont. on page 13

NEW PARISH HOUSE - MIRAMAR

Mrs. Rucsanda Sarbu De Bota (seated) with her niece, Ana Ponta, after the blessing of the new parish house (November 13) by Bishop NATHANIEL in Miramar, Florida. Mrs. De Bota is the benefactress of the beautiful new home.

Fr. Dumitru Sasu enjoys the open house with parishioners and guests in the new parish house following the blessing.

Loving Memories *Cont. from pag. 12*

love and understanding (even when they didn't understand!) that I could lean against thankfully. When my prayers seemed like meaningless words, I counted on their faith and prayers to help me through. What greater gift can a friend offer you?

Joe Lapadat was one of those friends. When I first came to the church in Los Angeles, a new bride and new convert, he and his wife Mary were among the first people who welcomed me into the parish. I learned so much from them! The faith, the humor, the down-to-earth sense of reality, the acceptance of life's harder knocks, their openness and friendship, all made them spiritual leaders for me.

If the Church is an eternal structure, then in my mind the Lapadats are eternal leaders in the Church. When Joe died, it didn't seem possible. Hey, I wanted to say, you weren't supposed to do that. How can we ever do without you? We still need you.

One of the wonderful things in an Orthodox funeral service is the sense of love, support, and participation of the people in the congregation. Holy Trinity was packed for Joe's funeral. Everyone shared in the grief, but also in stories about Joe and all he had done over the years for the church and community. We couldn't assume his family's grief, but we could be there praying with them and for them and Joe. We could help to build the walls of support for his family to lean on. I hope it helped, because the loss is immense.

I'd like to thank God and our church for Joe and Mary and their family, and the times we've shared and the friendship they've given us. Nothing can change that, not even death.

Psa. Nicole Mitescu

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In Memory of Helen Popa Veteanu

Helen Popa Veteanu passed away October 6, 1994 at her home in Arcadia, California with her daughter by her bedside. Helen stood strong, bravely, and courageously in all of life's hardships including the breast cancer before her passing. She was laid to rest October 11, 1994.

Helen was born February 9, 1915 to Sam Iosif and Elena Popa in Highland Park, Michigan. Both her parents were from Romania and immigrated to the United States in 1913. As a child, Helen was part of the Romanian Society in Detroit, Michigan, where she danced in her native costume at many of the festivities. She and her parents visited Romania in 1927. At age 17, she left for Washington, D.C. where she worked for eight years in the White House under the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. Her years in Washington, D.C. left her with many cherished memories. At the beginning of WWII she returned to Detroit to be with her parents, and at that time she transferred to the Investigative Bureau in the United States Government. During this time, she began to make and send packages to Europe to help Romanian refugees, which she continued to do for forty years.

In 1952, she met and later married in the same year Florea (Florin) Veteanu. Their only child, (Nina) Marlena, was born in 1954. When moving to Arcadia, California, in 1957 with her husband and child, she became a member of Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. At this time she transferred to the U.S. Customs Service where she remained till retiring in 1970.

After the sudden passing of her father and husband, her mother moved to California in 1968, and Helen took care of her till 1984 when she passed away at age 93. During her retirement, as throughout her life, she had a passion for reading and books. She created a library in her home which she cherished dearly. Her retirement years were happy ones in which she spent her time reading, enjoying her home and gardens, her daughter, her pets, and helping others.

Helen was a lovely woman, a harsh word she never spoke, and her kindness and generosity she shared with many, her daughter and friends. She was loved by many, but especially her daughter. Her passing has left a tremendous sorrow in our hearts which we must carry.

May God hold her gently in His Love and Embrace.

Helen is survived by her only child, Marlena F. Veteanu.❊

MISSIONS & MISSION STEWARDSHIP

During the past several years, our Diocese has been going through a cycle that has not occurred for many, many years. We are experiencing a mushrooming of new mission churches throughout America. With the fall of communism and a new wave of immigrants coming and settling in many cities where there are no Romanian Orthodox Churches, there is a need for new mission churches.

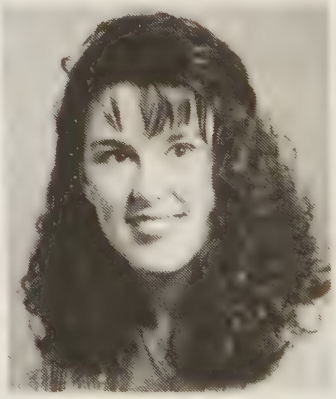
As of this date, there are 13 new mission parishes in our Diocese. Being small in number, the need is great for these new churches. Seeing this need, 3 parishes in our Diocese have sponsored 3 mission churches by sending $200.00 on a monthly basis to help them.

Parishes and Parish Councils - Please answer this plea, decide to sponsor a mission parish and follow the example of the churches in Akron, Canton and Dearborn. Make your parish's contribution part of the annual budget to be voted on in the Annual Parish General Assembly in January.

Collectively, there is much that can be done if those parishes that are truly concerned and want to help, will help. Won't your Parish be one that will sponsor a mission parish?! ❊

Gene Widican, Parish Council President
Presentation of Our Lord Church
Akron, Ohio

Scholarship Awarded



Natalie (Tasha) MacLellan

The 1994 Orthododx Brotherhood of Canada Scholarship was awarded to **Natalie Celeste MacLellan,** a student at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is the daughter of Rev. Fr. Joseph MacLellan and Psa. Martha MacLellan and is a member of St. George Orthodox Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Natalie is registered in a four year science degree in Physical Geography and Environmental Studies.

She attended Camp Vatra in 1989 and Camp Qu'Appelle as a teen counselor in 1990. Natalie is involved in the Orthodox Community in Winnipeg in activities such as regularly attending church services, curling, youth group and Romanian dancing. She is also active in the Humane Society and baseball league. Natalie is participating in the formation of an Orthodox Students Organization at the University of Winnipeg. ❊

PARISH REGISTER

BAPTISMS

Banciu, Briana Brighite, daughter of Petru & Silvana Banciu, Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Petru & Maria Ghenciu.

Copacia, Alexa Anne, daughter of Trevor J. & Kimberly A.C. Copacia, Shelby Twp., MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. Godparents: Tod & Sharon Copacia.

Covert, Mario Alan, son of Hayes & Joyce B. Covert, Canfield, OH. St. Nicholas, Alliance, OH. Godparent: Steve Mieropi.

Gavrila, Nicholas, son of Nicolae & Ana M. Gavrila, Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: George & Marinela Alexe.

Glass, Andrew Lee, son of Lovel A.L. & Elela Glass, Cleveland, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparent: Florica Milan.

Glenn, Nicholas Christopher, son of Tricia R. Rich & Christopher R. Saxby, Regina, SK. St. George, Regina, SK. Godparent: Trent Rich.

Goba, Katlin Cevin, son of Cevin Goba & Gaylene Prokopetz, Brandon, MB. St. John, Shell Valley, MB. Godparent: Larry Prokopetz.

Jovanov, Marcel Gavrilo, son of Marcela & Kimberly Jovanov, North Olmsted, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Steluta & Dimitrie Stingu.

Keta, Jacob Daniel, son of Livius & Maureen Keta, Lakewood, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparent: Marinel Keta.

Markovican, Jessica Ioana, daughter of Lavinel & Ionica Markovican, Shelby Twp., MI. Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Relu & Stela Srbu.

McAllister, Jonathan D., son of John & Mary Ann McAllister, North Canton, OH. St. Nicholas, Alliance, OH. Godparent: Julie Beeching.

Mihaita, Daniela Cristina, daughter of Florin & Cristina Mihaita, Cleveland, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Constantin & Doina Dragonoiu.

Simon, Rasvan Stefan, son of Stefan & Maria Simon, Chicago, IL. Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL. Godparents: Dorel & Luciana Muresan.

Tent, Monica Ashley, daughter of Virgil & Felicia Tent, Cleveland, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Paul & Margareta Vasile.

Vasu, Julia Christine, daughter of Mircea & Susan Vasu, Cleveland, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Tom & Linda Stanciu.

Winfrey, Amanda Lauren, daughter of Gary & Ileana Winfrey, Warren, MI. Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Pete & Mary Marina.

Yimdego, Job Gebrit, son of Gebrit & Almas Yimdego, Calgary, AB. St. Mary, Calgary, AB. Godparent: Taso Devadsis.

RECEIVED INTO THE CHURCH

Brown, David James, Calgary, AB. St. Mary, Calgary, AB. Rev. Frs. Michael Lupu & Daniel Matheson.

Irimie, Eva, Ravenna, OH. St. Nicholas, Alliance, OH. Rev. Fr. Raymond Samoila.

King, Marlin Mark Dale, Indianapolis, IN. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN. Rev. Fr. John Limbeson.

Omilian, Robert Joseph Edward, Sterling Hgts, MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. V. Rev. Fr. Laurence Lazar.

Tolle, Elise Christine, Indianapolis, IN. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN. Rev. Fr. John Limbeson.

Tolle, Kenneth Dale, Indianapolis, IN. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN. Rev. Fr. John Limbeson.

Tolle, Micah Christopher, Indianapolis, IN. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN. Rev. Fr. John Limbeson.

Tolle, Susan Diane, Indianapolis, IN. Sts. Constantine & Helen, Indianapolis, IN.

MARRIAGES

Glass, Andrew and **Mariana N. Tarla,** Cleveland, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Valerie & Steve Duma.

Kisarau, Petru and **Sofia Tutu,** Rochester Hills, MI. Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI. Godparents: Georgel & Ana Miclea.

Maahs, Donald W. III and **Leslie A. Koch,** Livonia, MI. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI. Godparent: V. Rev. Fr. Constantin Tofan.

Marku, Novak N. and **Karen L. Scheurer,** Canton, OH. St. George, Canton, OH. Godparents: Mike & Lynn Dragomir.

Martin, John Timothy and **Jean A. Smith,** Cleveland, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: John & Kathie Dragomir.

Miclau, Theodore III and **Kristen Edin,** Carrboro, NC. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Daniel & Libby Schiau.

Rosca, Ovidiu and **Gloria E.S. Martinez,** Sacramento, CA. Sts. Michael & Gabriel, Sacramento, CA. Godparents: Dumitru & Camelia Gruio.

Rowan, Lorne G. and **Angela M. MacLellan,** St. George, Winnipeg, MB./Abbotsford, BC. Holy Resurrection, Vancouver, BC (OCA). Godparents: Andrew MacLellan and Mary MacLellan.

Tonita, Ronald D. and **Wendy L. Findlay,** Regina, SK. St. George, Regina, SK. Godparent: Rick Tonita.

Toth, Wilmos and **Adina Turtuba,** Cleveland, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparents: Irimire & Licica Borzea.

Vendel, Edward S. and **Candice S. Johnson,** Lakewood, OH. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH. Godparent: Gregory Phillips.

DECEASED

Cabuz, John, 91. Holy Resurrection, Warren, OH

Charnoski, Sue L., 97. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI

Danghel, Anna, 72. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Gudz, George, 76. St. John, Shell Valley, MB.

Guzba, George, 84. Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI.

Hysuick, William, 79. Descent Holy Spirit, Assiniboia, SK.

Jaksa, Flora, 83, Descent Holy Spirit, Warren, MI.

Jonescu, Steven, 76. Descent Holy Spirit, Assiniboia, SK.

Kinnear, Lenore I., 71. St. Mary, Falls Church, VA.

Lucaschyk, Nicolae, 86. St. John, Shell Valley, MB.

Milosan, Florence, 68. St. George, Canton, OH.

Nasea, Paraschiva (Pauline), 96. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Nimereala, Charles, 73. St. Nicholas, Alliance, OH.

Pavel, Elena, 72. Holy Cross, London, ON.

Pavlov, Paulina, 88. St. John, Kitchener, ON.

Roteliuk, William, 86. St. George, Regina, SK.

Solomon, Mary, 77. St. Mary, Cleveland, OH.

Greetings

His Grace, Bishop Nathaniel
with the Vatra & Solia Staff
send all good wishes for the
Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord
and ask God's blessings in the New Year
for the Reverend Clergy & Faithful
of the Diocese
and for all of our dear readers!

Fr. Richard & Preoteasa Hildegard Grabowski
extend best wishes for a
Blessed Christmas
and may God grant you all good health
in the New Year!

SOLIA

October 14 - November 30, 1994

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SCRISOARE PASTORALĂ 1994

NAŞTEREA DOMNULUI ŞI DUMNEZEULUI ŞI MÂNTUITORULUI NOSTRU IISUS HRISTOS

"Cât de frumoase sunt pe munţi picioarele trimisului care vesteşte pacea, a solului de veste bună, care dă de ştire mântuirea, care zice Sionului: Dumnezeul tău este împărat!"

(Isaia 52:7)

Iubiţi întru Hristos,

Hristos se naşte!

Vechiul şi Noul Testament au prevestit şi vestit plinirea vremilor, un timp al istoriei când Dumnezeu, întru înţelepciunea Sa şi potrivit sfatului voii Sale, urma să trimită un om minunat, ales, şi unic, care să aducă neamului omenesc vestea cea nouă (Is.9:6, Mt.4:28).

Dealungul istoriei, Dumnezeu şi-a ales profeţii, pentru ca să-i rostească vestirea, chemând oamenii să se întoarcă la slujirea Lui. Ei erau inspiraţi de Dumnezeu, lucrând întru numele Său, reamintind neamului omenesc de măreţia menirii ce i-a fost dată în rânduiala întregei zidiri şi de legătura unică ce trebuia să o păstreze cu Ziditorul ei.

Dumnezeu a mai trimis şi alţi vestitori, puterile netrupeşti sau îngerii, ale căror vădiri însă au fost ca nişte iluminări de-o clipă în istorie şi a căror prezenţă lua sfârşit îndată după ce vestirea lor se termina.

Şi au mai fost apoi marii filosofi păgâni, în afara Poporului Ales a lui Israel, care din mila şi bunătatea lui Dumnezeu li s'a dăruit să afle diferitele adevăruri ale lumii zidite şi ale înţelepciunii omeneşti, pe care le-au împărtăşit cu restul omenirii. Vestirile lor însă erau subiective, de o însemnătate şi rost marginit, precum sunt toate speculaţiile omeneşti şi filosofice.

Poporul Evreu în schimb, aştepta venirea unui Trimis unic, o persoană ieşită din comun, aleasă deosebită, unsă de Dumnezeu pentru a vorbi în numele Lui în chip desăvârşit, care nu mai era un vestitor îngeresc de-o clipă, nici un simplu profet mărginit la o vestire limitată şi nici un simplu filosof mânuitor de teorii subiective.

Sf. Ioan Botezătorul, spunea celor care-l urmau: "Cel ce vine după mine este mai puternic decât mine. Acesta vă va boteza cu Duh Sfânt şi cu foc" (Matei 3:11); şi: "Nu sunt eu Hristosul" (Ioan 3:28). Iar Samaritenii, de alt neam decât poporul lui Israel, au ajuns să creadă în Impărăţia lui Iisus,spunând: "Noi înşine am auzit şi ştim că Acesta este cu adevărat Hristosul, Mântuitorul lumii" (Ioan 4:42).

Vorbele şi faptele lui Iisus Hristos sunt de fapt Veştile Bune prevestite de Isaia, care ne îndrumă la credinţa în Hristos, întru care se aduce pacea inimilor, fericirea vieţilor noastre şi mântuirea, darul lui Dumnezeu dat omenirii.

Cuvintele Sale sunt îndemnuri de a ne împlini noi înşine potrivit sfatului voii lui

Dumnezeu, cu ajutorul şi harul Său. Dar pentru a ne umple de această pace, de această fericire, de nădejdea mântuirii, de bucuria cea negrăită şi preamărită (1 Petru 1:8), trebue să-L cunoaştem pe Hristos, să-L numim "Domnul" nostru, să-L mărturisim ca Mântuitorul nostru.

Hristos a venit ca un tămăduitor să-Şi reînnoiască zidirea; ca un călăuzitor celor care au pierdut calea; ca cel ce a luminat mintea celor rătăciţi în confuzii. Dar Hristos n'a fost numai un simplu tămăduitor, ci tămăduirea însăşi; n'a fost doar un deschizător de drumuri, ci Calea însăşi; nu un simplu purtător de lumină, ci Lumina însăşi care nu rosteşte doar cuvinte omeneşti ci este Cuvântul lui Dumnezeu. El nu este unul dintre mulţii filosofi şi învăţători ai lumii, ci este unica Inţelepciune (Haghia Sophia) a lui Dumnezeu, egal şi de-o fiinţă cu Tatăl şi cu Sfântul Duh şi prin al Cărui Cuvânt tot universul a fost adus la existenţă.

Hristos nu este o alegere, El este Alegerea, cea una aleasă de Dumnezeu însăşi. Biserica Sa este singurul trup al celor care cred toate cele spuse mai înainte despre El, şi trăiesc împreună o unită viaţă sacramentală în prezenţa Lui. Şi ca un singur trup, îşi mărturisesc nădejdile lor, încrederea lor, mântuirea lor, întemeiate pe singura credinţă că Hristos este Messia, Mântuitorul, Unsul lui Dumnezeu, unul născut din Tatăl mai înainte de toţi vecii şi apoi dela Duhul cel Sfânt şi din Fecioara Maria, când s'a făcut om.

Când Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos şi-a început lucrarea Mântuirii, lumea stăpânită de Romani nu l-a cunoscut. In mai puţin de trei sute de ani, întreaga lume dimprejurul Mediteranei L-a cunoscut, ca apoi Vestea Sa cea Bună să ajungă până la capătul lumii, astfel încât astăzi, nu mai există niciun continent unde numele Lui să nu fie slăvit şi unde pacea,fericirea şi mântuirea adusă de El să nu fie prezentă. Hristos a spus: "Fiţi plămădeală" dospind zidirea lui Dumnezeu. "Fiţi sarea" care schimbă amărăciunea acestei vieţi. Cei credincioşi sunt într'adevăr drojdia, sarea, lumina ce duce mărturisirea Vestei celei Bune a lui Dumnezeu şi o poartă pe "frumoasele picioare" ale mărturisirii.

Hristos a înfruntat în Israel pe mulţi filosofi păgâni; apostolii şi sfinţii părinţi la rândul lor, au înfruntat pe alţii, dar puterea Vestei celei Bune preştiută de profetul Isaia, a schimbat faţa acestor filosofii, atunci, ca şi în zilele noastre. Intreaga omenire trebue să mărturisească unica Treime cea Sfântă, dătătoare de slavă, cinste şi închinăciune pentru totdeauna.

Odată cu prăznuirea Naşterii Domnului, se nasc în omenirea întreagă seminţele păcii, fericirii şi mântuirii comune tuturor făpturilor omeneşti. Cei care-L mărturisesc pe Hristos ca Domn şi care poartă roadele acestor seminţe, trebue să-şi ostenească picioarele, adică mărturisirea lor, pentru a face cunoscut tuturor că mântuitorul acestei lumi, care aduce pacea, fericirea şi mântuirea întregei omeniri şi pentru toate veacurile, s'a născut în noi, Sfătuitor Minunat, Împărat al Păcii.

Slăviţi-L!

+ NATHANIEL, Episcop

ŞI L-A CULCAT IN IESLE ...

Sf. Evanghelist Luca ne istoriseste despre Naşterea lui Iisus, că în zilele acelea a ieşit porunca de la Cezarul August, ca toată lumea să se înscrie la cetatea de care aparţine. Iosif şi cu logodnica lui, Fecioara Maria, s'au îndreptat spre Betleem, cetatea lui David, fiind din Nazaretul Galileii, din Iudea, el se trăgea din casa şi seminţia lui David. Când au ajuns ei la Betleem, toate casele de oaspeţi erau ocupate şi pentru ei nu s'a mai aflat loc un loc liber. Astfel au ajuns să se adăpostească într'o peşteră cu animale.

Sf. Evanghelist Luca ne spune, că pe când erau ei acolo, s'au împlinit zilele, ca Prea Curata Fecioară Maria să nască pe Fiul Ei întâi născut, L-a înfăşat şi L-a pus în ieslе. (Luca 2:7). In partea aceea erau păstori pe câmp, veghând de strajă împrejurul turmei lor, la care li s'a arătat îngerul Domnului care le-a spus: Vi s'a născut astăzi, Mântuitor, care este Hristos Domnul, în cetatea lui David. Şi acesta vă va fi semnul: Veţi găsi un prunc înfăşat, culcat în iesle." (Luca 2:11-12). După aceea au văzut împreună ca îngerul mulţime de oaste cerească, lăudând pe Dumnezeu şi zicând: Mărire întru cei de sus lui Dumnezeu şi pe pământ pace, între oameni bunăvoire! (Luca 2:14).

Toate cântarile Sfintei noastre Biserici preamăresc acest eveniment al Naşterii Domnului, cu mare bucurie, aşa avem în stihira după Evanghelia Utreniei: "Mărire întru cei de sus lui Dumnezeu, şi pe pământ pace, că astăzi primeşte Betleemul pe cel ce şade întotdeauna cu Tatăl, astăzi îngerii măresc pe pruncul ce s'a născut cu dumnezeiască cuviinţă." Se transmite bucuria îngerilor, păstorilor, a magilor celor ce slujeau stelelor şi de la ei s'au învăţat să-L caute şi să vie să se închine soarelui dreptăţii şi să cunoască răsăritul cel de sus. In Sedealmna 2-a se arată nedumerirea Preacuratei Pururea Fecioarei Maria, cum a născut pe cel fără de ani, zămislind fără bărbat. Cine a văzut naştere fără sămânţă? Dar vine dezolvarea: "Unde vrea Dumnezeu, se birueşte rânduiala firii." In Sedealna 1-a se aminteste că s'a născut în peştera din Betleemul Iudeii, din Fecioară de Dumnezeu Născatoare. In condacul sărbătorii avem textul: "Fecioara, astăzi pre cel mai presus înfiinţat naşte şi pământul peştera celui neapropiat aduce." La Catavasie, în cântarea a 9-a avem acest minunat text: "Taină străină văd şi preamărita, cerul fiind peşteră, scaun de Heruvimi Fecioara, ieslea sălăşluire, întru care s'a culcat cel neîncăput Hristos Dumnezeu, pe carele lăudându-L, îl preamărim." Prin Naşterea celui Prea Inalt Hristos Dumnezeu, peştera devine cer, Preacurata scaun de Heruvimi şi ieslea sălăşluire. Se preamăreşte o peşteră simplă cu animale.

Totuşi, noi ar trebui să ne punem întrebarea cum a fost voia celui Preaînalt, Dumnezeul nostru, Făcătorul cerului şi al pământului, ca la întruparea Fiului Său iubit, trimis în lume pentru mântuirea oamenilor, să I se aranjeze naşterea într'un loc atât de simplu, într'o peşteră cu animale? Mai întâi să vedem de ce a fost necesară o întrupare a Fiului lui Dumnezeu în fiinţă umană şi să trăiască printre oameni. Aceasta a fost pentru marea Sa iubire faţa de lumea creată de El, pe care o voia să o îndrepte, să o readucă la starea dintâi, când a creat-o, dar care s'a înstreinat de El, fiind înşelată şi amăgită de cel rău. Dumnezeu este iubire şi nu putea suferi ca să o lase în stăpânirea satanei. Sf. Ioan ne spune în Sfânta lui Evanghelie: "Că Dumnezeu aşa a iubit lume incat a dat pe Fiul Său Unul-Născut, pentru ca oricine crede într'ânsul să nu piară, ci să aibă viaţă veşnică." (Ioan 3:16). De aici putem înţelege, că lumea s'a îndepărtat de Dumnezeu, a ajuns la pieire, a căzut într'o situaţie din care nu se putea salva singură, fără ajutorul lui Dumnezeu, fără mila plină de iubire a Celui ce a creat-o şi numai El putea să o salveze, să o mântuiască.

Dumnezeu-Tatăl, care nu voieşte pieirea omului, a aşteptat în îndelunga Sa răbdare, ca să se întoarcă de la fărădelegile sale, după cum ne spune Sf. Prooroc Iezechil: "Viu sunt Eu," zice Domnul Dumnezeu, — "nu voiesc moartea păcătosului, ci să se pocăiască păcătosul de fapta lui şi să fie viu" (Iez. 33;11). La plinirea vremii, Dumnezeu a hotărît mântuirea lumii prin întruparea Fiului Său, care e Cuvântul Său, aşa cum ne spune Sf. Ioan, Apostol şi Evanghelist, la capitolul 1, vers 1: "La început era Cuvântul şi Cuvântul era la Dumnezeu şi Dumnezeu era Cuvântul." Şi Dumnezeu Cuvântul S'a întrupat în firea noastră trupească, să fie cu oamenii şi între oameni. Dar felul în care s'a efectuat această întrupare, e un fapt care trebue să ne dea de gândit: se naşte într'o peşteră cu animale şi în loc de leagăn este pus în ieslea destinată hranei animalelor. Dumnezeu Cuvântul, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, care S'a pogorît din cer pe pământ, ca să ridice pe oameni la cer, S'a umilit întrupându-Se în firea noastră pământească, şi încă în starea cea mai de jos a traiului omenesc, în cea mai mare simplitate şi lipsă de comfort uman, în peştera Betleemului. El putea să se nască într'o casă împărătească, ori regească, cu palate şi comfort luxos, bogăţie, servitori, etc. A fost totuşi, un sălaş, unde vieţuirea omenească nu l-a pătat cu ambiţiile şi tot felul de deşertăciuni păcătoase. Aşa a fost ales acel loc de voia şi planul lui Dumnezeu, ca să ne arate nouă oamenilor, că alergarea după bunuri materiale, bunuri lumeşti, ne atrag spre cele de jos, spre cele pământeşti şi ne împiedică înălţarea spre cele cereşti. Mântuitorul o dus o viaţă simplă, smerită, dar plină de iubire faţă de toţi oamenii, învăţând, vindecând şi iertând în toate ocaziile.

Putem spune că, Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, Unul-Născut şi Dumnezeu adevărat din Dumnezeu adevărat, S'a umilit pe Sine, când S'a întrupat în firea noastră omenească, a lăsat cerul şi mărirea Lui dumnezeiască şi a venit pe pământ, ca prin pilda vieţii Lui, să nu fie modelul pe care să-l urmăm pentru a dobândi viaţa şi fericirea veşnică, în împărăţia cea fără de sfârşit a lui Dumnezeu. Sfântul Apostol Pavel nu spune: "Să nu caute nimeni numai de ale sale, ci fiecare şi de ale altuia. Să aveţi în voi simţirea care era în Hristos Iisus. Care fiind în chipul lui Dumnezeu, n'a socotit o răpire a fi el întocmai cu Dumnezeu, Ci s'a deşertat pe Sine, luând chip de rob, făcându-se asemenea oamenilor

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şi la înfăţişare aflându-se ca un om, s'a smerit pe Sine, făcându-se ascultător până la moarte şi încă moarte de cruce." (Filip 2:4).

Mai departe Sf. Apostol Pavel continuă arătând smerenia şi mărirea Domnului, îndemnându-ne ca să-I urmăm exemplul pentru a dobândi mântuirea. Dacă Hristos, Domnul şi Dumnezeul nostru S'a smerit pe Sine luând asemănarea omenească şi a primit să se jertfească pe Crucea Golgotei pentru mântuirea noastră, care noi, având îndemnul şi exemplul Său atât de preţios, nu putem ca, în folosul şi binele nostru, să ne deşertăm pe noi de omul cel vechi şi păcatos din noi şi să introducem în noi pe omul cel nou, asemenea omului-Dumnezeu, Iisus Hristos? Ca să fim ascultători ca şi El, până la moarte, mai ales că ne-a lăsat nouă în ajutor, jertfa Sângelui Său scump, prin care noi putem să primim iertarea păcatelor, uitarea trecutului nostru păcătos, împăcarea cu Dumnezeu-Tatăl şi mântuirea sufletului nostru, dobândind astfel viaţa veşnică în împărăţia Sa.

Pentru a ajunge la acest final, noi trebue să ne orientăm şi să trăim după modelul de viaţă al Mântuitorului nostru Iisus Hristos, aşa cum au trăit sfinţii Apostoli, martirii, mucenicii şi toţi sfinţii. Mântuitorul a dus o viaţă fără grijă celor materiale şi ca om a avut de suferit şi El, foamea, setea, frigul, căldura, ofensele celor răi, etc. A avut o iubire nemărginită, El a iubit şi pe cei care L-au chinut, batjocorit şi L-au omorît şi ne-a lăsat şi nouă porunca să iubim pe cei ce ne fac rău, să-i iertam şi să ne rugăm pentru dânşii, considerând că cea mai înaltă poruncă creştinească. El alina suferinţele celor apăsaţi şi necăjiţi, vindeca bolnavii, învăţa şi ierta pe cei care se pocăiau şi sta la masă cu păcătoşii, iar fariseii îl criticau zicând, cum poate un om drept să stea cu păcătoşii alături. El le-a răspuns: "N'au trebuinţă cei sănătoşi de doctor, ci cei bolnavi, că n'am venit să chem la pocăinţă pe cei drepţi, ci pe păcătoşi." (Marcu 2:17). De aici putem învăţa şi noi, că nu avem dreptul să urîm pe păcătoşi, ci numai faptele lor, şi avem chiar datoria, pe cât ne este cu putinţă nouă, să-i convingem că faptele lor nu sunt bine plăcute lui Dumnezeu şi nici chiar oamenilor, să se lapede de ele cu căinţă la spovedanie şi primind Sfânta Impărtăşanie, cu inima curată şi îndreptaţi, să preamărească pe Cel ce S'a născut la Betleem, pentru mântuirea lumii şi a noastră, a tuturora. ❄

Pr. Romulus Radu

Crăciunul La Mânăstirea Din Rives Junction

Anul acesta ca şi anul trecut, mulţi credincioşi se vor aduna din nou să sărbătorească a doua zi de Crăciun la Mânăstirea "Adormirea Maicii Domnului" din Rives Junction, MI. Program: 9:00 AM — Acatist, 10:00 AM — Sf. Liturghie

După Sf. Liturghie se vor cânta colinde după cum este tradiţia.

Cei interesaţi pot scrie la adresa: 3389 Rives Eaton Rd., Rives Junction, MI 49277, ori telefonţi la: 517-569-2783.

Sfântul Arhidiacon Ştefan

In ziua a treia de Crăciun se face pomenirea Sfântului Arhidiacon Stefan, primul martir creştin. Explicaţia sărbătoririi lui în preajma Naşterii Domnului constă în faptul că "Cel născut în Betleemul Iudeii" a fost piatra de temelie a vieţii lui. După Înălţarea Mântuitorului la cer, apostolii s'au răspândit la propovăduirea Evangheliei. Primii creştini voiau să aplice întocmai porunca iubirii faţă de aproapele, aşa cum i-a învăţat Mântuitorul.

Cei înstăriţi veneau în mijlocul celor săraci, organizând mese comune, numite agape, la sfârşitul rugăciunilor în comun. Uneori, la agape se întâmplau neorânduieli. Văduvele sărace, de neam grec, se considerau nedreptăţite, bănuţinând că lor li se dădeau mai puţine ajutoare decât văduvelor de neam iudeu. Sf. Apostoli nu se puteau ocupa de împărţirea ajutoarelor şi curmarea neînţelegerilor de la agape, fiindcă aceasta ar fi însemnat să neglijeze propovăduirea cuvântului lui Dumnezeu. Atunci au propus credincioşilor să aleagă şapte bărbaţi cuvioşi pe care să-i rânduiască la împărţirea ajutoarelor şi slujirea meselor.

Adunarea credincioşilor a ales următoarele persoane, care s'au numit diaconi: Ştefan, Filip, Prohor, Nicanor, Timor, Parmena şi Nicolae. Apostolii şi-au pus mâinile pe capul lor spre a le împărtăşi darul Sfântului Duh şi le-au încredinţat serviciul împărţirii ajutoarelor şi alte servicii relative la credinţă şi învăţătură. In fruntea lor se situa Ştefan, el fiind numit de aceea Arhidiacon. El era "plin de har şi de putere, făcea minuni şi semne mari în popor" (Fapte 6,8). El se îndeletnicea şi cu răspândirea învăţăturii creştine. Adeseori se contrazicea în discuţii aprinse şi bine argumentate încât nimeni dintre învăţaţii iudeilor nu-i putea sta împotrivă. Din această cauză Ştefan a fost târît Sinedriului că defaimă numele lui Dumnezeu şi legea mozaică, ba este şi duşmanul templului, spunând despre el că va fi dărâmat. A fost adus înaintea Sinedriului spre a da socoteală de cele ce învăţa pe oameni. Când a venit în faţa Sinedriului, membrii acestuia "au văzut faţa lui Ştefan ca faţă de înger" (Fapte 6,15). L-au întrebat dacă sunt adevărate învinuirile ce i se aduc. Cu acest prilej Sf. Arhidiacon Ştefan a ţinut o cuvântare amplă, inspirată şi bine formulată, în care a descris viaţa poporului iudeu de la Avraam până la zidirea templului lui Solomon. A arătat credinţa strămoşilor acelui popor, suferinţele prin care a trecut şi aşteptarea venirii lui Mesia, care s'a împlinit în persoana lui Iisus, pe care iudeii L-au omorît, după cum au omorît pe toţi proorocii. Şi a încheiat cuvântarea cu următoarele vorbe adresate iudeilor: "Voi cei tari în cerbice şi netăiaţi împrejur la inimă şi la urechi, voi pururea staţi împotriva Duhului Sfânt; precum părinţii voştri, aşa şi voi. Pe care dintre prooroci nu l-au prigonit părinţii voştri? Şi-au ucis pe cei ce au vestit mai dinainte sosirea celui drept, ai Cărui vânzători şi ucigaşi v-aţi făcut voi acum. Voi, care aţi primit Legea întru rânduieli de la îngeri şi n-aţi păzit-o." (Fapte 7,51-53). Cuvântarea a înfuriat pe cei de faţă, mai ales atunci când Ştefan a ridicat ochii spre cer şi luminat de Duhul Sfânt a zis: "Iată văd cerurile deschise şi pe Fiul Omului stând de-a dreapta lui Dumnezeu" (Fapte 7,56). Atunci s'au năpustit asupra lui, l-au târât afară din Sinedriu, l-au scos din cetatea Ierusalimului şi l-au bătut cu pietre până l-au ucis. Pe când îl chinuiau, Ştefan se ruga şi zicea: Doamne Iisuse primeşte duhul meu. Şi, îngenunchind, a strigat cu glas mare: Doamne nu le socoti păcatul acesta. Zicând acestea a adormit (Fapte 7,59-60). Portretul sufletesc al arhidiaconului Ştefan iese din comun, remarcându-se prin statornicia credinţei în Hristos, slujirea lui până la jertfelnicie, strălucirea sa lăuntrică, forţa morală inegalabilă. "Era plin de credinţă şi de Duh Sfânt" zice Scriptura (Fapte 6,5). El a stabilit un principiu elementar: nici un scop înalt nu poate fi atins fără stăruinţă, ci numai cu răbdare şi privaţiuni. Nu fără rost s'a spus din partea unui gânditor că "Geniul este o îndelungă răbdare îngemănată cu suferinţă fără de care nu se poate realiza nimic de seamă. O pildă de stăruinţă o avem prin viaţa Sfântului Arhidiacon Ştefan pe care s'o urmăm şi noi, creştinii acestor timpuri.

ALTE SĂRBĂTORI ALE LUNII DECEMBRIE

Sărbătoarea Naşterii Domnului este însoţită, ca în Slava Sa Cerească, de Sărbătoarea Soborului Maicii Domnului, a doua zi de Crăciun, când venerăm pe toţi sfinţii şi îngerii ce-L înconjoară pe Fiul lui Dumnezeu, împreună cu cea mai sfântă dintre făpturile omeneşti — cu Preacurata Fecioară Maria. Aceste doua zile prealuminate, de slavă şi de bucurie, sunt însoţite simetric de Ajunul Crăciunului, când se pomeneşte Sf. Mucenţă Eugenia şi de a treia zi de Crăciun, când se pomeneşte Sf. Mucenic Arhidiacon Ştefan. Prima Duminică după Crăciun, se pomenesc sfinţii din aproprierea Domnului Iisus: profetul David, strămoş al Domnului în seminţie, care prefigurează pe Iisus ca păstor şi ca rege; Sf. Iosif, tatăl adoptiv al Domnului, care este socotit ocrotitorul natural al familiilor creştine, el hrănind pe Fecioară şi pe Prunc în pustietatea Egiptului; şi Sf. Apostol Iacov, "fratele" Domnului (Galateni 1,19), de fapt vărul Său, care a fost capul bisericii Ierusalimului şi a scris epistola sobornicească din Biblie.

Fericita sărbătoare a Naşterii este premearsă ca un luceafăr de un mare reprezentant al Bisericii: Sf. Ierarh Nicolae. Acesta s'a născut pe timpul împăratului păgân Domiţian. A suferit multă închisoare şi tortură pentru credinţă. A devenit episcop în Myra, în Asia Mica, sub Constantin cel Mare şi a participat la Sinodul de la Nicea în anul 325 când s'a stabilit rugăciunea Crezului. Oamenii l-au iubit cu pasiune. El este protectorul copiilor, al negustorilor, călătorilor, marinarilor şi învăţaţilor.

Poporul român are şi el doi sfinţi dragi în această luminată lună: în 18 Decembrie pe Sfântul Cuvios Daniil Sihastrul, duhovnicul domnitorului Ştefan cel Mare şi, în 26 Decembrie, pe Sf. Nicodim de la Manăstirea Tismana, din Vâlcea. ❄

Preot Const. Lăpuştea

Crăciun Român-American La Începutul Veacului Nostru

In primii ani ai veacului nostru, un număr destul de mare de Români, cei mai mulţi din provincii româneşti aflate la vremea aceea sub dominaţie străină: Ardeal, Banat, Bucovina, au trecut Oceanul, în căutarea unui trai mai bun. Aceşti emigranţi Români au aparţinut ultimului val masiv de emigrare admis fără restricţii în America.

Ca toţi emigranţii care au venit în America înaintea lor şi ca toţi emigranţii care au venit în America după ei, Românii ajunşi în Lumea Nouă au venit cu o imagine diferită despre ce era noua ţară şi cu o imagine greşită despre ce avea să fie propria lor soartă, în noul continent. Nici nu este vorba că ceeace credeau ei era mai "bun" sau mai "rău" decât ce putea oferi America ci despre faptul că "socoteala de acasă nu s'a potrivit cu cea din târg." Dar dacă greutăţile ce au trebuit să le înfrunte în primii lor ani de viaţă în America au fost mari şi felurite, rămâne un impresionant adevăr istoric că Românii-Americani au primit şi rezolvat problemele vieţii cu bărbăţie, curaj, înţelepciune şi foarte mult bun simţ. In marea lor majoritate, Românii veniţi la începutul veacului în America, nu aveau multă educaţie, dar această lipsă era bine compensată prin o bogată experienţă de viaţă. Ei aduceau cu ei dârzenia, modestia şi statornicia ţăranului român şi o foarte limpede înţelegere a diferenţei dintre bine şi rău.

Foarte repede şi fără să aibă lipsă de multe lămuriri, Românii-Americani de la începutul veacului au înţeles că ei trebuie să adopte căile ţării adoptive, că trebuie să se "americanizeze," dar în acelaşi timp au ştiut să păstreze acele trăsături esenţiale care îi defineau şi le dădeau o identitate unică: credinţa strămoşească şi anume tradiţii şi obiceiuri. Pentru a înţelege mai bine cum s'a petrecut acest proces istoric de adaptare şi cum s'a păstrat credinţa străbună, este bine să amintim câteva aspecte privind felul în care la începutul veacului, Românii-Americani sărbătoreau Naşterea Mântuitorului, Crăciunul.

In primul rând, trebuie să ne amintim că situaţia economică a primilor emigranţi Români în America, nu a fost de loc uşoară. Ei nu cunoşteau limba ţării şi aveau deprinderi destul de puţine şi, în atari împrejurări, au trebuit să accepte muncile cele mai grele şi mai periculoase. Intr'o scurtă povestire intitulată "Vis de Crăciun" şi publicată în calendarul ziarului Român-American, "Românul," din Cleveland în 1909, scriitorul şi publicistul Român-American, Nicolae Cucuiat Zamfirescu (mai bine cunoscut sub pseudonimul său literar, Vaida Receanul) descrie condiţiile grele în care trăiau şi lucrau Românii-Americani precum şi starea lor sufletească, în preajma Naşterii Mântuitorului.

In ziua de Ajunul Crăciunului, Ştefan, personajul principal al povestirii, îşi amintea cu nostalgie de Crăciunul petrecut "acasă," într'un sat din Ardeal şi, acelaşi personaj, contempla greul zilei prezente ..." venise de doi ani şi jumătate în America. Câte nu a avut de suferit în acest timp? De câte ori nu era să-i rămână mâna zdrobită de măselele roatei de la maşină şi de câte ori nu era să rămână cu degetele retezate de foarfeca mecanică? ..." Mai departe Vaida Receanul află bun prilej să descrie condiţiile de viaţă din "bort" ("boarding-house, pensiunea modestă în care Românii-Americani trăiau la începutul veacului) ..." Ion a lui Andreiu şi Liţă se lăsară obosiţi pe unul din paturi, aşa îmbrăcaţi cum erau. Alături de ei erau încă două paturi pe care durmeau alţi patru inşi ..." Dar chiar şi în atari condiţii rele Românii-Americani din vremea aceea îşi aminteau de buna cuvinţă datorată celor sfinte. In acea seară de Ajun gazda ... "Luă un chibrit şi aprinse o candelă ... ce era atârnată la icoana Maicii Domnului ..." Iar în dormitorul comun şi sărac descris mai devreeme, lumina, atâta câtă era în seara târzie de Iarnă, era răspândită de ...' "candela atârnată la icoană ..."

Situaţia descrisă de Vaida Receanul în povestirea "Vis

De Crăciun

Costache Ioanid

De Crăciun, sub fulgi zglobii
pe Isus din nou vestindu-L
trec pe uliţă copii
cu colindul.

Şi din zori până'n apus,
pe-o steluţă cu făclie,
ei duc lumii un Isus
de hârtie.

Dar tu, frate credincios,
porţi tu Pruncul ce trăieşte?
Duci în tine un Hristos
care creşte?

Nu-i vreun gând ce te-a'nşelat,
un simbol sau o icoană?
Simţi că-i viu cu-adevărat?
Cere hrană? ...

După bezna cea de ani,
şi-a adus copilul zorii?
Vin la tine cei sărmani?
Vin păstorii?

Simţi că Cel de L-ai primit
de lumină-ţi umple gândul?
Şi vin magi din răsărit
căutându-L?

Altfel Pruncul nu e viu,
Altfel, ochiul tău te'nşală.
Altfel staulu-i pustiu,
ieslea-i goală.

Şi din zori până'n apus,
ca pe steaua cu făclie,
porţi şi tu tot un Isus ...
de hârtie.

Troparul Naşterii Domnului

Naşterea Ta Hristoase Dumnezeul Nostru
Răsărit-a lumii lumina cunoştinţei;
Ca întru dânsa ceia ce slujeau stelelor
Dela stea s'a învăţat
Să se închine Ţie soarelui dreptăţii
Şi să te cunoască pre Tine răsăritul cel de sus,
Doamne Mărire Ţie.

Cont. de la pag. 22
de Crăciun" era în linii mari reală şi acestea erau condiţiile de viaţă ale Românilor-Americani Dar tot real era şi faptul că ei păstraseră credinţa adusă de acasă şi nevoia de servicii religioase regulate. Realitatea este că această dorinţă a făcut pe Românii-Americani să sărbătorească aşa cum puteau Crăciunul şi apoi să ridice modeste biserici în care să aducă laudă Domnului, aşa cum ştiau că trebuie făcut din moşi strămoşi.

Este emoţionant modul în care la începutul veacului, ziarele Românilor-Americani vorbeau în vorbe simple, frumoase şi pe înţelesul tuturor, despre semnificaţia zilei de Crăciun. Naşterea Mântuitorului era arătată nu ca un eveniment petrecut cu multă vreme în urmă ci ca o minune de tot unică şi milă Dumnezeiască mereu şi pururea alinătoare. Ilustrativ pentru cele arătate este un articol intitulat "Sărbători vesele şi fericite! Naşterea Domnului," publicat în ziarul "America" din 8 Ianuarie, 1910. (In 1910 Românii urmau încă "vechiul" calendar, Iulian.)

In articolul cu pricina redactorul "Americii" arăta că ..." ajunsese omenimea la deznădejde în urma nedreptăţilor şi a destrăbălărilor din lume ... şi nici batăr o rază de mângâiere nu să arăta pe seama celor obidiţi ... trimise atunci Atotputernicul pe fiul său în lume ... şi L-a trimis de aşa, ca primind fiinţă desăvârşită omenească, să treacă prin toate năcazurile şi suferinţele vieţii omenşti ... să arate omenirii ranele din cari sângerează, relele cari o bântuie, durerile de cari suferă, arătându-i totodată şi leacul cu care să poate vindeca ... păcatul strămoşesc pe care nu-l poate învinge decât iubirea, blândeţea, răbdarea ... Cei-ce mângâiere şi mântuiere dorim şi aşteptăm să ne apropiem deci de El ... soarele dreptăţii. Iesle modestă să-i gătăm şi noi ... Iesle în inimile noastre, pentru-că aici în internul nostru să i se săvârşească noua naştere. Dar să ne curăţăm întâi inimile de toată răutatea, pentru ca primire vrednică să i se facă ... Să-L primim în deplină curăţenie sufletească ... El e lumina celor căzuţi în întunerec, El părtinitorul celor înstrăinaţi, mângâierea celor întristaţi, bogăţia celor săraci şi fericirea celor bătuţi de soartă ... Redactorul "Americii" reuşise să afle în inima lui cuvinte picurate şi poate chiar împrumutate din "Cazania" adusă în sacul de emigrant. Dar în articolul lui nu era vorba de originalitate şi nici de încercare de inovaţie literară ci de efortul de a face unor oameni apăsaţi de greul vieţii," Praznic Luminos." Atâta cât a putut, în 1910, redactorul "Americii" a reuşit să facă a facă. ❊

Alexandru Nemoianu

Doamne, Naşterea Ta

Doamne, naşterea Ta pe pământ,
E-a noastră de Sus mântuire,
Şi'n toate colindele numele-ţi sfânt,
Se cântă în marea-ţi cinstire.

Tu, pacea din ceruri, se spune,
In viaţa noastră ai pus,
Şi ai venit ... o minune,
In lume iubire-ai adus.

Laŭdat fie Domnul Hristos!
In veacuri şi veacuri mărit,
Şi'n seara aceasta, colindul frumos
Nălţăm. Fie Domnul slăvit!

Viorica Bălaşa

Inchinare Intru Veşnicie La Zidirea Bisericii Din Kitchener

Pe-un picior de plai
se lumină-a rai,
veşnicia'n clipă
bate din aripă,
cer din Cer să fie,
scris în temelie,
osul de martir
creasca trandafir,
bolţilor potir.
Stea de dor oglindu'l
ca'ntr'un fulg colindul,
fără de prihană
zărilor icoană.

* * *

Pe un plai străin,
românescul crin
odrăzlind altarul
veacului dă rarul
lin şi rusalin
din străfund divin.
Inpietrita floare-i
în Ţara Niagarei,
cioplită-i în piatră
să ne fie vatră,
dăltuind prezis
grai din paradis,
loc de pomenire,
lumină'n zidire,
dorului rostire,
mugur sfânt — prinos —
adus lui Hristos.

* * *

Ca'n răcoarea unui psalm
zidul creşte sfânt şi calm.

* * *

Muşca-n lună carii
c'au plecat zidarii
ca să-şi vândă somnului
Ghetsimanii Domnului.
Zidu-i prunc, abia născut,
steaua'l fură cu'n sărut.
Heruvim fără aripă,
vai, sărmanului i-e frică.
Nu e lut, dar nu-i nici stea
şi'l săgeată-o cucuvea.
Groaza ce te'nsingură
Picură în lingură.
Bruma fricilor se'ngaimă
a tăgadă şi a spaimă.
Neagră-i noaptea prinsă'n stele,
doar pustiul urlă'n schele.
Luna prunc, să'l junghie.

* * *

Noaptea coaptă ca o fragă
s'o culegi de'ţi este dragă.

* * *

Nu mai plânge vântului
spaimele pământului
ce din veac aruncu-le!

* * *

Nani, nani, pruncule,
pentru groază
busuiocul toarce-o rază
firea apoi să deslege
să ne fii casă şi rege.
Steaua'n scăpărări de brici,
Slugă ţi-e, e-un licurici.
Te iubim fără de greş
Dormi ca floarea de cireş,
Nani, nani'n adevăr,
ceru'nşoaptă flori de măr,
albele şi dalbele,
pun pe leagăn salbele,
dormi aşa cum, cearcă dorul
prin altar lăuntric zborul.
Dumnezeu te toarce'n mirul
spinilor, în trandafirul
prea taboric, spus icoanei,
spovedind taina coroanei.
Nani, nani, dormi uşor
Ingeri-curcubeu cobor
la orice încheietoare
să te miruie cu soare.
Nani, nani ghiocel,
nani, nani motocel,
slovă din Emanuel.

* * *

Pentru zăbovirea'n noapte
Sfântul Tei să te înşoapte
de-a fi veacului izvor,
rugului aprins pridvor.
Ti-era inima ca piua.
Piatra încolţit-a ziua
care te cuminecă
spre-a ne fi Duminecă.
Nani, nani, linu-i lin,
dormi pecete şi amin,
că oricărei evrică
ne vei fi biserică.

* * *

Pe-un picior de plai,
mireasă din rai,
crin - împodobită,
lui Hristos menită.
Vulturul cu har
te'nconjoară rar
din şapte în şapte
izbăviri din noapte.

* * *

In binecuvânt
sărut pragu'ţi sfânt,
naos şi altar
bolţilor de har.
Binecuvântată fii
şi de morţi şi de cei vii,
şi de lună şi de soare
şi de iarbă şi de floare.
Binecuvântată fii
de bătrâni şi de copii.
Cine'n tine-o'ngenunchea
ce-a dorit, Domnul să-i dea,
fii izvor tămăduirii,
corabia mântuirii.
In veşmântul tău de cer
te-am oprit în Kitchener,
dor şi visul să te vadă
în a inimii livadă.
De-acum ce ne înteme-ne?
Duhul Sfânt e'n cremene.
N'am cuvânt diecilor.
Fii în veacul vecilor
Tărmul nostru rusalin
de acum şi-n veac. Amin.

Păr. Dumitru Ichim

INFORMAŢII

despre Adunarea Generală a Parohiilor din Januarie 1995.

Biroul Episcopiei aşteaptă lista in 3 exemplare a tuturor membrilor Parohiei care şi-au plătit cotizaţiile la zi. Aceste liste trebue scrise descifrabil, la maşină şi trimise Episcopiei nu mai târziu de 9 Ianuarie 1995.

Adunarea generală nu poate fi convocată, fără aprobarea prealabilă a listei membrilor.

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